

stuck and unable to move forward even in the face of a looming government shutdown. There are just a few legislative days until the government runs out of funding. Democrats have seen this coming for months and Republicans should have seen it also. Maybe they did but just ignored it.

That is why we have called for bipartisan budget negotiations. We are running out of time. That is an understatement. Last week, the Republican leader told this body:

We only have so much floor time in the Senate. We are going to try to use it on serious proposals that have a chance of becoming law.

I am sure he should read that to himself again today, yesterday, and maybe tomorrow. But after having made the statement, instead of voting on this key priority—that is, funding the government—we are spending time on cynical show votes even though everyone knows the result. Despite the fact that a shutdown looms in a matter of days, the Republican leader is turning the world's greatest deliberative body into the "show-vote" Senate.

Ensuring that the government has the funds it needs to operate is the basic responsibility of the Senate. That Republicans have let this crisis build instead of joining Democrats at the bargaining table is an embarrassment to this institution. The Republican leader and I don't see eye to eye on all political issues, but we both support a clean bill to stop a government shutdown. That is what he wants. A clean bill is the only way to prevent a government shutdown, no riders, no tricky things in it at all.

Just yesterday, the Republican Leader said, the sequester-level spending caps should be lifted. Thank goodness he said that. I agree with him. I agree with Senator MCCAIN and Senator LINDSEY GRAHAM, who have talked about this on the Republican side. We all know how this ends. The Senate will pass a clean continuing resolution. I hope that is the ending we all see because that is what we should see.

When I say a clean bill, I mean no policy riders, no procedural loopholes, just a clean funding bill devoid of tricks. So what are we waiting for? Why are we dragging the country to the brink of another shutdown when the solution is staring us in the face? There is nothing to gain from delaying the inevitable and much to lose. The reality of the Senate is that the longer we wait, the more difficult the path forward will be. In the past, Republicans' inability to govern responsibly has amplified the voice of government shutdown advocates like the junior Senator from Texas. Every moment the Republican leader wastes increases the likelihood that one Senator's objection can raise enough procedural problems to force the entire government to shut down. I am not making this up, it happened 2 years ago.

Captains of chaos want nothing more than for the Republican leader to twid-

dle his thumbs. Every day we wait increases the leverage of those who want to shut down the government. We have seen this drama before. It happened 2 years ago. The Republican leader will need to file cloture at least twice if any single member of the caucus objects.

So if the Republican leader wants to avoid a government shutdown, he should start the process of bringing a bill to the floor by Thursday at the absolute latest. Time really is running out. Next week, Pope Francis will address Congress. We expect half a million people to come for the Pope's visit to Capitol Hill. The President of China will make his visit the very next day to the Nation's capital. It will be his first visit.

So there will be 3 or 4 days in session next week at the most. We are ready to move forward. There is no reason to wait any longer. It is time for Republicans to skip the manufactured drama, pass a clean funding bill today, and get something done around here for the American people. For months, Democrats have been clear about our priorities: First, any appropriations measure cannot be hijacked for ideological or special-interest riders. Second, any funding increase for the Pentagon must be matched by at least a dollar-for-dollar increase for domestic programs, including domestic anti-terror programs.

These are commonsense principles that should form the basis of any budget agreement, but Republicans have refused to negotiate. They are now focused on scoring political points at the expense of the American people. We voted twice. Why waste this time again on another vote? There will only be a few days of session next week.

When we return the following Monday, we will have just 3 days before the government funding expires. That is October 1. We should act now, pass a clean continuing resolution preventing a government shutdown, and then responsibly negotiate a compromise. It should be a short-term CR. Any other decision is a waste of precious time that we do not have.

#### HEALTH INSURANCE COVERAGE

Mr. REID. Finally, the number of Americans without health insurance dropped dramatically last year. All the press yesterday and this morning are reporting this, but this comes as no surprise. The good news happened as the Affordable Care Act's major coverage provisions took effect. This is further evidence the Affordable Care Act is working. The share of people without coverage dropped in every State in the Union in 2014. That is the first time in the history of the Census reports that every State has improved.

States that expanded Medicaid under the Affordable Care Act did better than those that did not. States that adopted the new law's Medicaid expansion had a 3.5-percentage-point drop in their uninsured rate. That is about 1½ times the 2.3-percentage-point decline in States

that did not expand the program. Overall, the national uninsured rate dropped by 2.9 percentage points.

Now, all these numbers mean that the uninsured rate is now at the lowest in the history of our country—the lowest ever. Once again, the Affordable Care Act, ObamaCare, is working.

#### RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

#### HIRE MORE HEROES ACT OF 2015

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will resume consideration of H.J. Res. 61, which the clerk will report.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

A joint resolution (H.J. Res. 61) amending the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to exempt employees with health coverage under TRICARE or the Veterans Administration from being taken into account for purposes of determining the employers to which the employer mandate applies under the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act.

Pending:

McConnell amendment No. 2640, of a perfecting nature.

McConnell amendment No. 2656 (to amendment No. 2640), to prohibit the President from waiving, suspending, reducing, providing relief from, or otherwise limiting the application of sanctions pursuant to an agreement related to the nuclear program of Iran.

McConnell amendment No. 2657 (to amendment No. 2656), to change the enactment date.

McConnell amendment No. 2658 (to the language proposed to be stricken by amendment No. 2640), to change the enactment date.

McConnell amendment No. 2659 (to amendment No. 2658), of a perfecting nature.

McConnell motion to commit the joint resolution to the Committee on Foreign Relations, with instructions, McConnell amendment No. 2660, to prohibit the President from waiving, suspending, reducing, providing relief from, or otherwise limiting the application of sanctions pursuant to an agreement related to the nuclear program of Iran.

McConnell amendment No. 2661 (to the instructions) amendment No. 2660), of a perfecting nature.

McConnell amendment No. 2662 (to amendment No. 2661), of a perfecting nature.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the time until 11 a.m. will be equally divided between the two leaders or their designees.

The Senator from Illinois.

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, my calculation is there are about 36 minutes remaining before the vote. I ask unanimous consent on the Democratic side that I be given 3 minutes, Senator CARDIN 5 minutes, Senator MENENDEZ of New Jersey 5 minutes, Senator CARPER of Delaware 5 minutes—Senator CARPER 3 minutes, and Senator KAINE 2 minutes.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Would the Senator please restate those.

Mr. DURBIN. Yes, 3 minutes for myself, 5 minutes for Senator CARDIN of